

## Risk Factors for Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a common bone disease that affects women and men. It occurs when the body fails to form new bone. During our life, our body needs phosphate and calcium to build bones. Bone is living tissue; our bodies are always breaking down old bone and replacing it with new bone tissue. If our dietary intake of phosphate and calcium is not sufficient or if the body does not absorb enough of the minerals from the diet, bone production and bone tissue development will suffer.

Age also affects bone production; as we enter our forties and fifties more bone is broken down than is replaced. During menopause women may lose bone quickly for several years; eventually it may slow down but **will** continue. In men the loss of bone mass is slower, but by age 65 or 70 men and women are losing bone mass at about the same rate.

Some people are more likely to develop osteoporosis than others. Factors that increase the likelihood of developing osteoporosis and fractures are called risk factors. These may include:

- Personal history of fracture after age 50
- Current low bone mass
- History of fracture among immediate family members
- Being female
- Being thin and/or having a small frame
- Advanced age
- A family history of osteoporosis
- Estrogen deficiency as a result of menopause, especially early or surgically induced
- Abnormal absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhea)
- Anorexia nervosa
- Low lifetime calcium intake
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Use of certain medications (corticosteroids, chemotherapy, anticonvulsants and others)
- Presence of certain chronic medical conditions
- Low testosterone levels in men
- An inactive lifestyle or extended bed rest
- Excessive use of alcohol
- Being Caucasian or Asian, although African Americans and Hispanic Americans are at significant risk as well

If you have experienced several of these risk factors, please contact your health care professional. There are medications and treatments available to help individuals living with osteoporosis.